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# STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

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Recent Books

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COUNT FIVE AND DIE. By *Barry Wynne*, as told by Colonel William Eliscu, O.B.E. (New York: Ballantine Books. 1959. Pp. 152. \$0.35.)

This purports to be an OSS story, a recent addition to the literature of the over-stuffed American pocket. It was originally published in England early in 1958<sup>1</sup>; it subsequently appeared in a Dutch edition<sup>2</sup> and in a movie version. Mr. Eliscu (who allegedly took part in the operation) is one of the sponsors of the OSS television feature which has appeared in the United States since the fall of 1957.

Both the English and American editions claim to be true accounts except for changes in "certain minor incidents and the names of leading participants." The American version reinforces this claim with a purported introduction by General Donovan. General Donovan's alleged accreditation of the story makes the book of interest to the intelligence specialist and injects an element of mystery into what appears to be a hastily scaled-up version of a movie script. The mystery: How was General Donovan led to underwrite as factual and truthful, if he did, an account of OSS activity so patently a figment of the imagination?

<sup>1</sup> London: Souvenir Press.

<sup>2</sup> *Tel tot Vijf en Sterf!* (Amsterdam: Scheltens and Giltay, 1958.)

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The book's story line is as diaphanous as the habit of its principal character, one Hannie Herodsen, a toothsome Abwehr agent. At the story's start in the spring of 1943, she is plying her blond lissomeness on a "nameless Lt. Colonel" of OSS Algiers. Having learned from the hapless officer the place and time of the Allied attack on Sicily and perhaps the details of some OSS missions, she repatriates to Germany by submarine at the end of 1943. She receives the personal attention of Canaris' successor, Kaltenbrunner, who sends her early in 1944 to England.

Infiltrated by submarine in March, Hannie is the same Dutch refugee she was in Algiers: cover in her case is as light as her baggage. She sets herself up in a London apartment and proceeds to take over direction of a resident German IS net consisting of four individuals, including two radio operators, which had presumably been successful in defying British security forces from the beginning of the war. Her principal target is the Americans; her mission is to ascertain the time and place of the upcoming Allied attack on the continent. With a lucky—though, one feels, predestined—assist she locks with an OSS officer in London, this time a Captain. Traces of her Algiers activity carried in the heads of officers in OSS London are her downfall.

A joint British-OSS operation ("Stampede") is laid on under OSS supervision to permit the Captain to develop the relationship unwittingly with Hannie and guide her into a specially tailored Dutch resistance organization in London. Thereafter Hannie, a singular example of an unwitting double agent, is built up and fed deception material on the cross-channel attack. OSS London sacrifices the lives of two Dutch resistance operatives in order to make this a better fly-trap. In a cops-and-robbers ending the GIS net in England is rolled up by OSS (and the British), but Hannie is permitted to deliver the tainted information to Berlin. The outcome, according to the author, was a diversion of Nazi military forces to Holland, a significant contribution to unbalancing the strength available to oppose the Allied landing in Normandy. Hannie forfeits her life to Kaltenbrunner when it is realized that her information was false.

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All of this is fiction purporting to be fact. An examination of OSS and other official materials has produced no evidence to authenticate the account, even if one allows the maximum for changes "in certain minor incidents and the names of leading participants." Beginning with Mr. Eliscu's colonelcy, his O.B.E., and his claim of participation in the "Stampede" operation, the story comes apart at the seams when subjected to critical review. The record of German intelligence activity in World War II knows no character or composite identifiable with Hannie Herodsen. It is now known that the British security services controlled or neutralized all GIS operations in the UK during that period. There is no trace in OSS documentation of an operation entitled "Stampede" or otherwise identifiable with what is described in the book. The extensive interrogations and testimony of Kaltenbrunner in 1945-46 contain nothing to support the story. Finally, the official Dutch resistance has been unable to identify the two individuals purportedly sacrificed.

The mystery of the Donovan imprimatur is, therefore, of more than casual interest: the endorsement was decisive in quieting the skepticism of a reviewer in one of the national news magazines.<sup>3</sup> The issues raised by Mr. Eliscu's TV portrayal of OSS were put sharply in the press in 1957.<sup>4</sup> Because the OSS is the foundation of U.S. national intelligence and counterintelligence abroad, the questions raised by *Count Five*

<sup>3</sup> *Newsweek*, January 26, 1959, page 106: "If *Count Five and Die* were not introduced and vouched for by Gen. William J. Donovan . . . it could easily be mistaken for a highly implausible piece of spy fiction. However, British author Barry Wynne's story is true, and it's a corker."

<sup>4</sup> The *New York Times*, September, 1957, observed: "There could be an engrossing TV series in some of the courageous and imaginative achievements of the men who served in O.S.S. But these are stories that should be presented with careful fidelity to detail and without the shabby, melodramatic flourishes that marked this telecast." In November 1957 the *Washington Daily News*, in a similar review, questioned whether "it's a good idea for the OSS to be memorialized on TV by the series under that name," which it found to be "nothing more than the same old foreign intrigue stuff that has cluttered the little screen since 10-inch days."

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*and Die* are basic. Who are the residuary legatees of the OSS tradition? Is the tradition served by publicity which is as speculative in substance as it is in purpose?

JAMES G. WANNINGER